

Ramkote : The Historical village

<https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/ramkote-the-historical-village/>

Nestled in beautiful hills surrounded by lush green forests, on the bank of Basanter stream , lies a small Town Ramkote on Dhar Udampur Road .The place is about 85 Km from Jammu well connected by road through Mansar, Suriansar and Dayalachack. From Udampur, it is about 55 Km on the Dhar Road while the distance from Kathua is near 50 Km *via* dayalachak Road.The old name of this town was Mankote, a small state established by Raja Manak Dev, a contemporary of Raja Narsingh Dev of Jammu (1272-1314 AD). The state was spread over an area of 24 Kms in length and 15 Kms in breadth. Geographically it was bounded by Bandalata in the north, karaidiri mountains in the south separating it from Samba and Jasrota , Billawar in the east and in the west by Bhoti. Later it was renamed by Raja Suchet Singh (1822-43 AD) as RAMKOTE. At present, it is a tehsil Headquarter with a population of more than five thousand people. This place is famous for Dogra history and culture. This Dogra heritage village is popular for Dogra history, Mankote style of paintings, ancient temples, remnant of historical monuments, the unique Chinjj and Mela, the oldest Ramlila and wonderful dogri culture and festivities.



Village view of Ramkote situated on Dhar Udhampur Road in between the lush green valley

History of Ramkote

As per the archeological explorations , at many sites around Ramkote, like Billawar, kootah, Chinji Makwal, Dayalachak and around Udhampur evidences for Pre-historic, Neolithic, Harappan, Kushana, Gupta, Post Gupta and Early medieval cultures were found in this region. It remained a part of Dogra Kingdome since inception of Duggar land. This was evident from the copper plate inscription in chamba that mentions about durgara, which is origin of word Dogra Land. The area comprised of Barahumpura, Vallapura and Babbarpura. The Barahumpura is Bralumar including Chamba (Himachal Pradesh),Vallapura is the present day Billawar and Babbarpura is modern Babour a small historical town situated on the Udhampur-Dhar Road in Majalta Tehsil of Udhampur District. All villages around Ramkote were part of Babbapura which was a prosperous township in early medieval period ruled by Kriti during 11th Century A.D as referred in the Rajtarangini by Kalhana. Until this period, Ramkote was a small town. However, with the advent of Jasrota Kingdom founded by Raja Jasdev this venerath town was built and handed over by him to Raja Karandev .His eldest son Raja Bhoj Dev extended his rule upto Surinsar and ruled Bhabbapur around 1150 A.D. After the death of Raja Bhoj Dev in the

battle with Nasar- ul-Din (Bikrami 1032), his eldest son Bhrorak became Raja of Bhabore. He was not a fit ruler and left the throne for his younger brother and his successors were Bir Dev, Kirpal Dev and Ahal Dev. Later on, one of their descendants, Raja Manak Dev conquered some villages nearby Ramkote and built a fort on the bank of Basanter Nallah and named it as new State Mankote. Though, it was a small State having dimensions of 25 km by 15 km lying between village Khoon and river Ujh, this State remained important for Maharajas of Jammu. Since inception, about twenty three rajas ruled this state until their extinction in 1820. The notable names among them were Manak Dev, Udai Dev, Nagar Dev, Uttam Dev, Harichand Dev, Azmal Dev, Kalas Dev, Biram Dev, Sarwar Dev and Partap Dev. Among them, Raja Pratap Dev was a contemporary of Akbar who commanded Dogra armies against the rebellion by Hill Rajas against Akbar. Another notable ruler of Mankote was Raja Trehi Dev. These rajas ruled the State successively until 1690 A.D, when the last Mankotia Raja Raja Maipat Dev had to flee and leave the throne. His descendants were known as Mankotia Rajputs who mostly went back to Himachal Pradesh except fewer who settled around Jammu. Successively this State came under the rule of Jamwal clan founded by Raja Dhruv Dev, a Jamwal ruler of Jammu in 1703. Subsequently, around 1808, Jammu became part of the Sikh Empire, under Maharaja Ranjit Singh who in 1820, gave Jammu to Gulab Singh. The State of Ramkote was given by him to Raja Suchet Singh (Plate 1A), his younger brother who later established the kingdom of Bandralata in 1822. Thereafter, the grandson of Gulab Singh, Raja Ram Singh acquired the throne of Bandralata and changed the name of Mankote to Ramkote to set aside the influence of Mankotias and replacing the prefix Man to Ram as Ramkote reflecting his name and also changed Bandralta to Ramnagar as well. After the Death of Raja Ram Singh, this place came under the rule of Jaswal clan around 1880 by Raja Ran Singh, grandson of the raja of Jaswan, Ummed Singh (1800–1849)



This happened because a suitable match for granddaughter of Maharaja Gulab Singh was proposed by his chief purohit with grandson of Raja Ummed Singh of Jaswan in 1877. This was a very difficult decision for Gulab Singh as Raja Ummed Singh had joined the Sikh in an unsuccessful revolt against the British and he was stripped off his title and exiled to Almora where he died. His grandson, Raja Ran Singh was following punishment in jail with iron mould

in the neck. Even then, he was helped by Maharaja Gulab Singh who requested the British viceroy to free Ran Singh from captivity and got him married to her granddaughter. His request was accepted, as a result he later acquired the *jagir* of Ramkot with 22 villages as rajwara in Jammu, the jagir in Jaswan, along with several other former properties in Rajpura and Amb,. Raja Ran Singh died in 1892 and was succeeded by his son Raja Raghunath Singh who died in 1918. Thereafter, Raja LAKSHMAN SINGH (Plate 1 B) succeeded him who ruled Ramkote from 1918-1945. He died on 4th June 1945 in Ramkote and was cremated at Khoon, seven kilometres from Ramkote. From 1945 to 1947, his son Raja Chain Singh acquired the throne. Thereafter, when the State ceased to exist in 1947 he moved to Amb in Una district of H.P. However, Lakshman Singh's brother, Rajkumar Shiv Dev Singh (IAS) preferred to live in Jammu at Ramkote house which is still located at Panjtirthi Jammu and served in the administration of Maharaja Hari Singh of J&K State and retired as Chairman of the JK Public Service Commission. His elder son Rameshwar Singh IPS retired as IG in J&K while the younger son Baldev Singh Jaswal retired as IAS officer from J&K.

Old Forts and palaces

Since, it was ruled by three Rajput clans namely Jasrotia, Mankotia and Jasswals, there used to be three independent palaces (Mahals). The first one built by Manak Dev is now completely destroyed. Fortunately, for the last ten years Mankotias from all over India have now been organizing their *Mael* (Congregation) (plate 2 a) and started building a Kuldevi temple at this place. The 2nd Palace was huge with large open ground. This Mahal housed High school Ramkote till 1976 but is now completely ruined. The Third one was built by Jaswals (plate 2b) and partially renovated for establishing a museum by Brigadier Jaswal (plate 2 c). An open ground in front of it is *Rajas Mandi*, now used as playground as well as to organize the famous Dangal of Ramkote every year. In order to house the war horses, a stable still exists around the palace of Raja (Plate 2 d). Besides there are number of Burjs still standing around the periphery of Ramkote. For public welfare ,a very old Radha Krishan Temple (Plate3 a), and a large water reservoir (*Talla*) were built (Plate 3 b) and still exist on the ground in the centre of famous temples of Ramkote. This was to supplement water needs of the villagers for worship and drinking. As there is scarcity of water in such areas, a popular song is famous (*Lok ramkote-e dai, soye dai tarai-dai te barsanti ra-aj la-a de*)



Old palaces and Forts of Ramkote : Heritage need to be Preserved

Dr R.K.Gupta, Professor (Entomology) SKUAST-J
E mail : rkguptaentoskuast@gmail.com